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THE EPOCH OF THE MAMMOTH

The Epoch of the Mammoth. By G. James C. Southwell, A.M., LL.D. 8vo. (London: Trübner, 1878.)

BOOKS may be divided into three classes from the point of view offered by criticism, and apart from all considerations of style. There are carefully-written books, the natural fruit of much thought and labour by men who have special knowledge of their subject and who spare no pains to avoid using faulty materials which afterwards may have to be removed, as is generally the case, with much trouble and annoyance. The second class consists of books written without care and very generally the outcome of ignorance or vanity, full of errors, and worse than useless; and lastly, there are some books containing much useful information, but so grouped around views which are utterly wrong that they are worthless for any purpose in which exact knowledge is required. In this class very generally the true is so mingled with the false that it requires the eye of an expert to tell the one from the other. With the first and second of these classes it is easy for a reviewer to deal. It is his duty to welcome the first, not without pointing out (if he can, and we know from experience that very frequently he cannot) the mistakes inseparable from all books, just as he is bound to rebuke sternly the second, and to warn the reader that he is on dangerous ground. It is, however, hard to do justice to the third; for while the information may be useful *per se*, in its position in the book it may be mischievous because it is worked into a wrong hypothesis, thus fulfilling Lord Palmerston's definition of dirt as "matter in the wrong place."

The work before us falls into the third class. Its author seems to have skimmed most of the current literature of the day, more especially reviews, and out of the vast array of facts at his command has picked out those suitable to his views on the recent origin of man. Many of his facts are true, but they are so grouped as to lead the reader to a wrong conclusion. Many of his asserted facts are untrue. The work is a sequel to "The Recent Origin of Man," reviewed in this journal, and is to a large extent an answer to the criticism which it then provoked. We regret that the author has not profited by his experience and that he should have expended so much trouble in attempting to prove a negative which in the nature of things cannot be proved.

The author's aim is to show that man has not appeared on the earth more than six or ten thousand years. He starts from the historical basis offered by the Bible, and in support of chronology ingrafted on the Holy Writ by the unfortunate ingenuity of Archbishop Usher, and in defence of the high civilisation of primeval man, he seizes some of the scraps of history flung out in the struggle between various Babylonian and Egyptian scholars. He adds to these his own views of the discoveries at Hissarlik and Mycæne, and the recent results of exploration in Etruscan tombs and dwellings in Italy, ultimately

arriving at the conclusion that man is not older in the Mediterranean area than ten thousand years. To all this the obvious answer suggests itself, that history can tell us nothing as to the antiquity of the human race, because written characters, essential to history, are the result of a high civilisation. How long it took mankind to work out through picture writing a record of the past is an idle question, since we have no data bearing on the point; but we cannot believe that the art of writing was elaborated in a short time. "Fortes vixere ante Agamemnona" whose names we know not.

To attempt to circumscribe the antiquity of man within the limits of history appears to us as idle and barren an attempt as could possibly be undertaken. It would be as reasonable to seek figs growing on thistles as to look for any proof of the recent origin of man in the written record. These facts are so obvious in the present condition of knowledge, that we should not bring them before our readers were they not utterly ignored by the author of this work, as well as by some of his critics.

Our author having established to his own satisfaction the recent origin of man in the Mediterranean countries, enters into the question of the unity of the human race. The pre-Christian cross, either in the form of the handle cross of the Mediterranean districts or the Swastika of the Buddhists, was widely spread among ancient peoples. The tradition of a deluge is almost universal. That of a terrestrial paradise is widely spread: we read of the gardens of Alcinous and Laertes, of the Asgard of the Scandinavians, and of sundry other gardens mentioned in various writers Indian, Chinese, and Arabian. Then we have Megalithic monuments scattered over widely-separated countries, and the habit of distorting the human skull, and of scalping. The range, also, of the boomerang, pointed out by Gen. Lane Fox, the custom of depositing flint implements in graves, and of worshipping phalli and serpents, are taken to "prove the unity of the race, almost without any other argument on the subject."

Then the author proceeds to his application, "If the human race is one, the Egyptian, the Hindoo, the Babylonian, and the palæolithic tribes of the Somme Valley were one; and if Kephren and Cheops were near of kin to the fossil man of Mentone or the savage who owned the Neanderthal skull, and if, moreover, the antiquity of man in Babylonia does not go farther back than some ten thousand years, then the men of the French and English river gravels cannot be more than ten thousand years old. The reverse would only be possible on the hypothesis that the Egyptians were the descendants of the men of the Somme Valley. But this is excluded by the fact that the Egyptians appear at once as a civilised race; and, as we have stated, there are no earlier remains of any kind in Egypt" (p. 21). We give this as an example of the style of reasoning. So far as we know, nobody, not even the author, has ventured to assert that the two Egyptian kings above mentioned "were near of kin" to the so-called fossil man of Mentone, or stood in any near relationship to any of the ancient inhabitants of Europe. The argument is to us wholly unintelligible. Why should the Egyptians be descended from the men of the Somme Valley any

more than the latter from the Egyptians? The civilisation of Egypt throws about as much light upon the barbarism of the palæolithic age as that does upon the civilisation of Egypt.

The author has taken great pains to break down the archæological classification by the trite argument that bronze, iron, and stone have been very frequently found together in various parts of Europe. We suppose that no modern archæologist has disputed the fact. Dr. John Evans holds that they shade off into one another like the prismatic colours of a rainbow. Dr. Keller and Mr. Lee, his able translator, give numerous examples from the pile dwellings of Switzerland, and other places, of the association of implements composed of these materials. This association, however, has nothing to do with the question as to whether the archæological classification is correct. The conclusion of the Scandinavian and Swiss archæologists, that the use of stone, bronze, and iron characterises three distinct phases in the civilisation of mankind in Europe, has been amply confirmed by the numerous discoveries made during the last five-and-twenty years. They are merely the outward marks of new stages of culture.

Nor has the subdivision of the stone age into palæolithic and neolithic, by Sir John Lubbock, been shaken; they are separated from one another by the greatest changes in climate and geography, and in animal life, which have taken place since the arrival of man in Europe. Our author, however, denies this, and brings forward a series of examples derived, for the most part, from accounts either unverified by subsequent observers or in themselves equivocal, to show that the palæolithic men possessed domestic horses, oxen, pigs, dogs, and "hens," and were acquainted with the art of making pottery. We have no space to examine each of these statements in detail. We would merely say that the scientific exploration of caverns and tombs is by no means easy, and that until comparatively recently everything of unknown date found in them was supposed to belong to about the same age. Hence it is that the literature of archæology offers to the author the examples which he gives us.

With regard to pottery it must be remarked that the vessels assigned to a palæolithic age, such as that of the Trou de Frontal, belong to well-known neolithic types, and that the domestic animals assigned to the same age are identical with those of the neolithic farmers and herdsmen. Caves were used by the neolithic peoples for purposes of habitation and burial. The duty, therefore, of proving that these things are of palæolithic age rests with the author;—it is not the business of a reviewer to undertake proof of a negative that they are not. The assertion, however, that no neolithic implements have been met with in the same cave as the so-called "fossil man of Mentone," whom we have always believed to belong to that age, is negated by the polished celt from that cave which we have seen in the museum at St. Germain—an important fact, which, strangely enough, has escaped the notice of all who have hitherto written on the subject.

We shall not repeat the arguments in favour of the palæolithic age of the interments at Solutré,

which have already been combated in this review. We have always held that they are not earlier than Gallo-Roman times. The results of the further researches of MM. Ducrost and Arcelin, in 1875-6, show that, above the strata containing the remains of mammoth, reindeer, horses, and palæolithic implements, there is a stratum containing polished stone axes, iron and bronze implements, and interments of the neolithic, Gallo-Roman Burgundian times. The so-called palæolithic are in all probability referable to one of these three ages, and from the fact of the skeletons resting at full length to one or other of the two last periods.

The author is not content with bridging over the interval between the neolithic and palæolithic times by the asserted occurrence in the latter of characteristics hitherto to be considered peculiar to the former. He tells us that extinct pleistocene animals lived "some of them down to historic and even post-Roman times." In support of this view he brings forward the occurrence of the mammoth from the peat bogs of Holyhead, Torquay, and Colchester, just as if there were no peat bogs in the pleistocene times—as, for example, the pre-glacial forest-bed, with mammoth and other creatures, on the shores of Norfolk and Suffolk. He relies also upon the fresh condition of the carcasses of the Siberian mammoth as evidence against high antiquity, just as if ice would not preserve anything imbedded in it for an indefinite length of time.

Palæontologists will be astonished to hear that the cave-bear has been met with in the peat bogs of Denmark, and in Italy in association with relics of the neolithic age. The first of these reputed occurrences has been given up by M. Nilsson, and the second has not been verified by any competent authority. The latter observation will also hold good regarding the reputed occurrence of the cave lion in the peat of Holderness. The Irish elk is asserted by our author to have been living in the marshes of Europe as late as the fourteenth century, a statement based on a speculation of Brandt's that the *Machlis* of Pliny and the *Schelch* of the *Nibelungen Lied* are identical with that animal. The palæolithic implements themselves (p. 220) are traced to the stone axe from Babylon, preserved in the British Museum, of a "palæolithic type which reappeared in Europe when some of the ruder Turanian tribes migrated in that direction."

It is not profitable to pursue this review further, for in this work one printed statement is treated as if it were of equal value with another, without any attempt being made to sift the improbable from the probable, or the true from the false. The facts are brought together in it very much like flies—if one may indulge in a comparison—on a fly-paper, and bear the same relation to each other as the heterogeneous collection of dead and dying winged creatures there brought together in a strange fellowship. We regret that the writer should have spent so much time as he evidently has spent in collecting matter for a book written without scientific method, and which certainly does not prove that the age of the mammoth is removed from the present time by an interval of from six to ten thousand years.

W. B. D.